

MARIA CANTWELL  
WASHINGTON



## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

October 6, 2003

Mr. Jeff Koenings, Ph.D.  
600 Capitol Way North  
Olympia, Washington 98501

Dear Mr. Koenings:

Thank you for contacting me regarding the Washington State Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group (RFEG) program. As Director of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, I appreciate hearing from you on this important issue, and I sincerely apologize for the delayed response.

The importance of salmon to the Pacific Northwest—economically, recreationally, and culturally—is enormous. As you know, 2001 was an especially difficult one for our salmon, as the drought and energy demands have placed a serious strain on Pacific Northwest water supply. I am pleased, however, that in 2002 and thus far into the season, salmon returns have been at record levels.

As you know, the RFEG program was created in 1990 by the Washington State Legislature to involve local communities, citizen volunteers, and landowners in the state's salmon recovery efforts. I would like to commend the 14 RFEGs across the state that combine the work of volunteers, donations, and state funding to restore the salmon population and habitat. I believe it is critically important that programs such as the RFEGs are adequately funded in order to support our ongoing salmon recovery efforts.

That is why I am pleased that the Senate Interior Appropriations bill included \$1.4 million for the RFEG program. Please be assured that I will work to protect this funding as the Senate continues work on this year's remaining appropriations bills.

Again, thank you for contacting me. Please do not hesitate to contact me in the future if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator

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